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ABSTRACT

A recent Carnegie Foundation Report, "College: The Undergraduate Experience in America" reviewed baccalaureate programs through an analysis of eight tension points. This paper reviews these eight points and discusses their implications for teacher education which is intricately tied to undergraduate education. Those issues that affect colleges in general will have an impact on teacher education programs. Each tension point is summarized and thoughts on the impact on teacher education are offered. The following eight tension points are considered: (1) the transition from high school to college; (2) college goals and curriculum; (3) teaching priorities of the faculty; (4) conditions of teaching and learning; (5) the quality of campus life; (6) governing of the college; (7) assessing the success of college programs; and (8) connection between campus and the world. (JD)

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PROBLEMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION --- IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The 1987 Carnegie report, College: The Undergraduate Experience in America, written by Charles Boyer lists eight tension points facing American colleges. This paper reviews these eight points. Each tension point is summarized and thoughts on the impact on teacher education are offered for consideration.

PROBLEMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION --- IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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In a recent Chronicle (February, 1988) article Arther Levine posited that criticism of higher education occurs when periods of change or upheaval occur in a society. Levine said, "At such times, questions about the purpose and performance of higher eduction loom large" and there is "a natural tendency to look backward for answers" (B2). Levine cited criticism from other eras as evidence of the perennial problems facing higher education. The article concluded that a constructive agenda would be useful for reviewing higher education rather than a longing for a "golden era" that never existed.

A constructive study was put forth by a Carnegie Foundation report, College: The Undergraduate Experience in America (Boyer, 1987). The report is based on surveys and site visits at 29 representative colleges and universities and is a companion piece for an earlier Carnegie report on the high school. In a foreword to College, Boyer stated, "If the push for educational excellence is to yield results, the nation's colleges and universities must ask hard questions about the quality of their own work" (p. xi).

The report reviewed baccaleureate programs through an analysis of eight tension points. This paper reviews these eight points and discusses their implications for teacher education which is intricately tied to undergraduate education. Those issues that affect colleges in general will impact teacher education programs. Each tension point will be summarized and thoughts on the impact on teacher education will be offered.

Tension 1 The transition from school to college

The first point of tension that Boyer discusses relates to the students' transition from school to college. He examined the problem from both sides of the change. Colleges often complain that students are not adequately prepared for college level work, primarily in basic communication skills. Boyer also stated that guidance in high schools is often hampered by a lack of clear recruitment and entrance information.

He strongly recommended a need for educators of both institutions to work more closely together to generate a cohesive educational program. Related to this goal he reported that America is the only country which offers universal undergraduate education.

Implication for Teacher Education Programs

1. To respond to the need for more specific guidance, and advisement during orientation or high school visitation days, education faculty need to be available to potential students and parents to share the positive aspects of choosing a teaching career today.
2. We need to be open and clear with these prospective students about the fact teacher education programs often have higher academic requirements and the likelihood of the students success in the program based on their SAT scores or high school GPA. They should be advised that these requirements prepare them to meet state standards for certification.
3. If the college has a freshman orientation system and freshman advisors, the education faculty need an opportunity to explain the program to freshman, e.g. that entrance into the teacher education program is not automatic as with many majors - established academic and non-academic requirements must be met by their sophomore year.
4. College faculty can make themselves available to meet with future teacher associations in nearby high schools. If necessary they may support the school in the establishment of programs where none exist.
5. Also, special attention needs to be given to the non-traditional student. Many of our teacher candidates are mature adults returning to college. We need to try to ease their transition back into school. They are generally highly motivated but initially insecure about their academic skills. They may also be heads of household and special arrangements may have to be considered during the student teaching experience.

Tension 2 Goals and Curriculum

1. In the history of college education the conflicting ideas of individualism and community can be seen. The 18th century schools typically had a uniform curriculum and goals. Changes in 19th century America saw a rise in individualism and the emergence of the conflict between liberal studies and professional education. This conflict still exists on many campuses.
2. The report states that an "effective college has a clear and vital mission" (p. 58) that is shared by the students, faculty, and administration. The goals are shaped by the needs of the student and society. The study found that some colleges have such goals but many do not. Often students do not know or fail to understand the mission of their college.

Implications for Teacher Education

1. There is a need to develop a clear statement of goals that identify how liberal arts and the general studies fit into the teacher education program or vice versa.
2. The current debate in N. C. and elsewhere over requiring an academic major reflects the conflict in goals and ways to achieve them.
3. Students need to understand the goals of the college and their major and to see how the parts fit together.
4. Understanding and implementing the goals may require a realignment of faculty. Faculty in other departments will need to work with the education faculty and education faculty will need to be viewed as academics contributing to the mission of the college.

(Tension 2 continued)

The report addressed a variety of curriculum issues such as poor preparation of entering students which has spawned many remedial courses. One example was UCLA which admits the top 12% of a graduating class but 50% are then placed in remedial coursework (p. 76). Other issues include the need for emphasizing a second language and improving writing and oral skills. The report encourages the idea of writing across the curriculum and the enrichment of majors through common learnings about "language, heritage, social institutions, and the rest" (p. 114).

Implications for Teacher Education

1. With diversity of cultures today all students may need to study a foreign language.
2. Faculty and students have to recognize that many prospective majors will begin with remedial courses that may lengthen the program. Future teachers must have strong oral and written communication skills. Certification guidelines in N. C. and many states require oral communication class.
3. The education program can lead the writing across the curriculum program; it can also recommend that new professors be queried about this before being hired.

Tension 3 The priorities of the faculty

Boyer's third point is related to the priorities of the faculty. This is not a newly uncovered problem and is related to the prior point. At most institutions the definition of a professor's responsibilities is three-fold: to remain up-to-date in one's field by conducting scholarly research; to be a successful, accessible teacher; and to provide appropriate professional service to the community around the college. The point of tension occurs when these obligations become unrealistic and the undergraduate student is lost in the squeeze. The mission of the college must provide a clear indication as to which of these three responsibilities receives the most emphasis so that this will be equally clear to faculty and incoming students.

Boyer recommendsthat research institutions not short change undergraduates. That professors, not teaching assistants, should teach lower level classes. (And that these classes should be a reasonable size to allow learning.) Boyer also recommends more options and opportunities for faculty renewals through sabbaticals.

Implications for Teacher Education

1. The obvious implication for teacher education is that, like all faculty, those involved in teacher preparation must be well rounded scholars. Research about successful learners and quality learning environments is being developed continually. We cannot adequately prepare future teachers by relying solely on information from our experiences in the classroom and graduate school. Obviously, we must also remain up-to-date with state requirements.
2. The fact that many education faculty are involved in student teacher supervison allows us the opportunity to serve two goals at once. Other opportunities are available by offering workshops or educational resources to area teachers.
3. Of course, sitting in a classroom for one hour once a week is not sufficient to claim to have a complete grasp of present problems. Some institutions have faculty exchange programs where the college professor swaps classes with a public school teacher for one or two semesters or serves as a volunteer aide a few hours weekly.

Tension 4 Conditions of Teaching/Learning

The report stated that observations revealed that in "many classrooms there was a mismatch between faculty and student expectations, a gap that left both parties unfulfilled" (p. 140). The survey revealed that most students were satisfied with the teaching, but the pressure for grades "diminishes their enthusiasm" (p. 143). Many students reported cheating, buying term papers, copying homework, etc. Lectures were the dominant instructional method and class size was viewed as too large.

Sexism was also noted. Class discussions were often dominated by men (p. 150). Classrooms tended to be competitive rather than fostering cooperation (page 151.)

Twenty-five percent of students reported they spent no time in the library. Sixty-five percent spent less than four hours per week. The report says that students must be taught to use the library. (p. 160)

Another issue concerns the incorporation of new technology. (Recent issues of the Chronicle have told how enrollment increased as schools required the purchase of computers.) The Carnegie study posits that "there is a danger that greater credibility will be given to data than to ideas" and that scholars will mistake information for knowledge. The challenge is not only to teach students how to use the new technology but also to encourage them to ask when and why it should be used". (p. 173)

Implications for Teacher Education

1. The number of teacher education students seems to be on the rise again. Class size must be limited, especially for those involved in field courses if effective student-teacher interaction is achieved. Many colleagues and administrators may not support NCATE ratios for supervison or the need for controlling class size.
2. Teacher education professors need to model good teaching for their majors and for their colleagues. Current research supports the use of cooperative learning models. Johnson & Johnson who've written extensively on this topic say it is best learned by the model of the instructor. Education faculty and could promote workshops for colleagues on teaching and evaluation.
3. Students who are to become teachers must learn about computers and how to use the new technology wisely with children. Certification criteria in most states dictate computer literacy for teachers.

Tension 5 The quality of campus life

Boyer wrote four chapters on this fifth point; tension related to the quality of campus life. He found an often wide separation between what occurred during scheduled classes and the remainder of activities which comprise student life.

When the college allows narrowly defined job descriptions so that there is no support structure for interchange between faculty, students and staff responsible for organizing student activities, the result is that non-academic activities appear to, and do undermine a students' academic work. The most obvious of these is athletics. But when faculty fail to support events such as concerts, poetry readings and guest speakers the students miss the opportunity to view education as a process of looking for connections between disciplines.

This lack of a sense of community undermines the stated mission of the college. Non-academic activies should be monitored and supported by the faculty ... and, once again the problem of different needs of residential and commuter students was stated.

Implication for Teacher Education

1. In teacher education programs as in other professional degrees, students are often very single-minded and actually resent attempts to broaden their college experiences. Many of our students are parents or are working and want to know the minimum number of credit hours necessary for graduation and certification. We need to be as flexible as possible with scheduling but continually model involvement and enthusiasm in activities outside the classroom. Whenever appropriate, credit for attendance and follow-up discussions in class should help students recognize the value of being broadly informed, without letting outside experiences undermine course work.

Tension 6 Governing of College

The study found that decision-making mechanisms on most campuses do not work well. Professors are often not committed to the institution and the role of students in decision making isn't given serious consideration (p. 235). Presidents tend to be viewed as "managers" (p. 238).

Faculty in small schools tend to be more involved in governance than those at larger schools (p. 242). Student government tends to be weak both because of student passivity and lack of encouragement to participate (p. 246). The section on governance called for "a voice for all" (p. 250).

Implication for Teacher Education

1. As numbers of majors have declined teacher education programs have lost some "clout". Today business majors and sometimes others outnumber teacher education majors. Once powerful schools of education may have to fight for recognition. As programs are geared to majors not in education, new roles for faculty from teacher education may have to emerge.
2. As the role of the college president becomes more managerial, the academic preparation of the president may be directed at business. These individuals may know little about education, the certification criteria, etc. Teacher educators may have to work with the college administrators more closely. An example of recent conflicts concerns the Holmes group. Some presidents have wanted to join the Holmes group but did not understand the impact this would have on their undergraduate programs in teacher education.

Tension 7 Assessing the outcome

As all educators would expect, Boyer stated that assessment of the success of a college program should be linked to stated college goals. He recommended that assessment measures should evaluate a student's ability to think clearly, to integrate and apply knowledge and to grasp the connections between courses rather than to just reflect knowledge from courses separately. A unified approach as this would vary from the present situation where evaluation is handled by professors for individual courses.

Implication for Teacher Education

1. Many states, as N.C., have instituted such a unified approach. Teacher candidates must pass the NTE regardless of the quality of the college work. This does not reflect the concerns surrounding the validity of using a standardized measure.
2. Within the teacher education program we recommend an emphasis on the assessment of communication skills. Every course should consider demonstration of oral and written communications abilities equally imporant to course content and process.
3. Other suggestions for assessing the success of teacher eduction programs are connect to follow-up measures, e.g.

Tension 8 Connection between Campus and World

As students move through college most are preparing for work. Job prospects for both professional and liberal arts majors are strong, but for the liberal arts majors finding work may take longer (p. 269). College placement offices need support on campuses. One college, Westmar in Iowa, will give a refund of $2000 for a student with a C+ average who isn't employed within six months (p. 270).

Undergraduate programs are often overshadowed by the pressures of graduate schools. The report says this is harmful (p. 275). The report also discusses the need to offer special guidance for minorities.

The report says "the undergraduate experience is to be measured by the willingness of graduates to be socially and civically engaged" (p. 278). Graduates must have a more global view of the world and their roles in meeting change.

Implications for Teacher Education

1. Teacher educators need to take an active role in helping graduates make a smooth transition to work. Most are involved in wwriting references and helping students locate jobs, and the job market is strong now for all teaching areas. Some schools are providing support to graduates during their first year of teaching. (N.C.-ICP program has some professors as mentors. At James Madison University all education graduates are visited during their first year of teaching.
2. Prospective teachers need to be involved in student education groups such as NCAE-NEA. This can extend their professionalism so they are prepared to be leaders in their profession.
3. Programs need to be concerned about strengthening the skills of graduates so that the first year of teaching is not a culture shock. Practicum experiences may help prepare for the realities of teaching.
4. We may have to consider alternative programs to better prepare teachers. Maybe the fifth or sixth year programs would better prepare students to be reflective caring teachers.

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